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Naturally-Occurring Asbestos General Information

- Asbestos is a term used for several types of naturally-occurring fibrous minerals found in many parts of California. The most common type of asbestos is chrysotile, but other types are also found in California. Serpentine rock often contains chrysotile asbestos, especially near fault zones. Serpentine rock is abundant in the Sierra foothills, the Klamath Mountains, and Coast Ranges. Serpentine rock is typically grayish-green to bluish-black in color and may have a shiny appearance.
- Asbestos is not found in all serpentine rock or fault zones, but when it does occur, it is typically present in amounts ranging from less than 1% up to about 25%, and sometimes more. Asbestos is released from serpentine rock when it is broken or crushed. This can happen when cars drive over unpaved roads or driveways which are surfaced with serpentine rock, when land is graded for building purposes, or at quarrying operations. It is also released naturally through weathering and erosion. Once released from the rock, asbestos can become airborne and may stay in the air for long periods of time.
- Other sources of asbestos are in man-made products. The most common sources are heat-resistant insulators, cement, furnace or pipe coverings, inert filler material, fireproof gloves and clothing, and brake linings. Asbestos has been used in the United States since the early 1900's, however, asbestos is no longer allowed as a constituent in most home products and materials. Many older buildings, schools, and homes still have asbestos containing products. Therefore, laws are in place to protect citizens when these buildings are renovated or demolished.
- There are many laws pertaining to asbestos. The Air Resources Board adopted a statewide control measure which prohibits the use of serpentine rock for unpaved surfacing applications if it has more than 5% asbestos. There may be additional or more stringent laws concerning asbestos in your area - please contact your local air pollution control district for further information.

For further information please see:

Fact Sheet #1: Health Information on Asbestos
Fact Sheet #2: School Advisory for Naturally-Occurring Asbestos
Fact Sheet #3: Ways to Control Naturally-Occurring Asbestos Dust
Fact Sheet #4: Naturally-Occurring Asbestos Around Your Home
Fact Sheet #5: Monitoring for Asbestos

You may also download these fact sheets as one file in Adobe Acrobat format.

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